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# Press Release

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**FROM THE CHARLESTON GAZETTE-MAIL (Saturday)**

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by: Bob Kelly

## Remembering Pearl Harbor at WVU

Once again on WVU's downtown campus, there will be a memorial ceremony on Pearl Harbor Day. Members of VFW Post 548 will gather beneath the mast of the USS West Virginia, as they have every Dec. 7 since 1975.

Attorney General Darrell McGraw plans to be there. He rarely misses.

"One time it snowed," McGraw said. "Another time I couldn't make it because it was the day my son (Darrell III) was born."

As a student almost 50 years ago, McGraw was instrumental in saving the mast and bringing it to WVU for future generations to contemplate.

Since 1961, the steel cylinder has towered gracefully over the plaza in front of Oglebay Hall. With each passing year, however, students seem more oblivious to it, which is too bad. The mast is about all that remains of the mighty battleship, which was torpedoed and sunk in the sneak attack that launched America into World War II.

The West Virginia became a symbol of U.S. resolve as it was raised from the bottom of Pearl Harbor, repaired, and sent back into action against the Japanese.

After the war, the ship sailed across the Pacific to the Puget Sound Naval Shipyard where it remained dormant until 1959, when it was sold for scrap.

That's when McGraw stepped in. How he became involved is a story in itself. He was tapped by Joe Gluck, legendary dean of students and former Navy chaplain, who believed the mast should be saved.

Gluck further believed that an ambitious, energetic student should spearhead the drive to retrieve it for display at WVU. McGraw immediately came to Gluck's mind.

McGraw has never been popular in the business community. But long before he entered politics, he evinced the sort of entrepreneurial genius that suggested he might have made a fine businessman himself.

McGraw was one of the student regulars at Mrs. Veasey's Hav-A-Lunch, which featured good old-fashioned home cooking.

The baked steak, meat loaf, mashed potatoes and gravy, and fluffy dinner rolls were one thing, but Mrs. Veasey's cakes were truly special.

McGraw's wheels were always turning. He knew there must be a wider market. "I was looking for a way to make a little extra," he said.

It dawned on McGraw that students' birthdays fell on dates when they were far from home. Since kids couldn't be with parents to blow out the candles, McGraw reasoned, maybe Mom and Dad would spring for a birthday cake baked fresh in Morgantown.

Mrs. Veasey was agreeable. She got \$1 per cake, which McGraw sold for \$3. He kept \$1 as profit and reserved another \$1 for

sales and marketing. “Basically, that was to hire some girls to type,” he said.

To make the enterprise work, McGraw needed home addresses for thousands of students. He went to see Gluck and talked him into providing a list. “I suppose I had demonstrated organizational capacity,” McGraw said.

In any event, a few months later, it was only natural that Gluck turned to McGraw to handle the logistics of getting the mast to Morgantown. McGraw’s brother Warren knew somebody at the Burlington Northern Railway, which took it to Chicago. The B&O hauled it to Columbus, where it was loaded on a flatbed dispatched by a trucking firm in Bellaire, Ohio. The mast was taken directly to the Capitol circle and then shown off in little towns along the highway between Charleston and Morgantown.

Alas, war protesters greeted the truck upon arrival in Morgantown.

“My dear friend H. John Rogers was among them, holding up a sign that said, ‘Let this mast stand as an eternal monument to the folly of men’,” McGraw said. WVU officials didn’t quite know where to put the mast, so it was carted off to a construction company equipment lot in Sabraton, where it lay for a couple of years. By the time the mast was erected, McGraw was in law school. He didn’t know about it until he walked out on the law school steps and saw it happen.

“I was glad,” McGraw said. “It is an important reminder of our nation’s history, and it just seems to belong there.” People go to college to learn. Members of VFW Post 548 will provide another lesson on Pearl Harbor Day, thanks in part to McGraw’s efforts as a student.

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